

Hints & Tips for working parents & Carers

March 2020

Juggling work, home schooling and dependent care commitments

Introduction

We are all being tested in ways that are exceptional and completely new to us

Nursery and school closures add a further dimension of challenge for those of us who are working parents or have other dependents at home

We don't pretend to have all the answers; we'd like to share some ideas and we are quite sure that we will all discover other approaches that we can share as we go.

Here are some initial suggestions and prompts as we start to establish very new ways of working.

Tips for working parents

Establish a routine for the whole family

Start with some structure; this will be important for everyone. Incorporate reading, music, exercise, movies and meal times as well as studying

Keep a balance of planned activities and free time. Share out the household chores. And build in some rewards! Write up the schedule and keep it visible to everyone in the house

Have a frank discussion

Talk to your team and your line manager about your commitments and share ideas, test them out and speak up if it's not working for you. Agree that they will also speak up so there's no second guessing. Consider taking some annual leave whilst you establish a routine for your family

Flex Working Hours

You may have to try out different work hours; consider core hours plus flex. You may find early in the morning or later at night are more productive times. Talk to your line manager about trying out new working patterns. Where possible, don't be constrained by how you used to work; consider all options and be open to experimenting

Tips for working parents

Research & Share

Share ideas with colleagues and friends. Research resources; some schools are providing a huge amount of input. If you are not getting this kind of support reach out to parents who are willing to share. There's a lot of fun online resources like PE, Yoga and dance classes.

Talk about what's working and what's not as a family; hold a 'weekly review meeting' to let everyone express their opinion and share ideas!

Shift work

If you are sharing the responsibilities with a partner, ensure that you divide rather than being 'always on' with the responsibility for childcare.

Have periods where one of you can totally focus on work while the other is overseeing your children. Try to get into a rhythm that works for you both

Take breaks together

Let's seize this as an opportunity for families to spend quality time together. Build in coffee / juice breaks as well as lunch times so you can all catch up. This will hopefully mean you will get fewer ad hoc distractions as they will know when they are seeing you next!

Tips for working parents

Redesign your space

You may have to completely rethink your use of space and furniture; ensure everyone has somewhere to sit and work at the same time. Involve your kids in the whole process – they can be very creative and may find it fun!

Set realistic expectations

You cannot be the most inspirational teacher, the perfect parent and the model professional. This is going to be a juggling act. Be honest with yourself and everyone around you. Some of your standards will have to flex; your response time to certain things at work may change. Be explicit about this, manage expectations and don't be afraid to explain why. Consider setting an email signature that explains your new working pattern

Explore old fashioned ways

Think about what children did before technology. Planting seeds and nurturing them, playing board games, painting, drawing, knitting, sewing. We'll all come out of this with new skills and children are no different. Tap into their interests and passions and help them to explore longer term projects as well as day to day tasks

Tips for working parents

Screen time

Consider relaxing your screen time limits and try not to feel too guilty. These are exceptional circumstances and play dates and day trips need to be replaced by something. Be aware of what they are accessing rather than being too paranoid about the amount of time that they are using their devices

Depending upon the age of your kids they may do this themselves

For younger children it's important to help them maintain interaction with friends and family. Face-timing Grandparents, arranging a Skype playdate with friends, hide and seek with mobile phones!

Where to go for help

There are plenty of [additional learning offers & resources](#) to support you & your family

[Coronavirus: How to help kids cope with life without school](#)

[Joe Wicks Kids Workouts](#)

[Online workouts in Hong Kong](#)

[Online learning in Hong Kong](#)

[Make any room a classroom](#)

About us

Howden Employee Benefits & Wellbeing work with clients of all sizes – both in Hong Kong and globally - to provide dedicated employee benefits & wellbeing consultancy. We've won many industry awards for our work and are widely recognised for our innovative and creative approach to benefit design.

We remain committed to supporting clients and the wider HR community during these challenging times. If you want to know more or simply to have a chat about ways you can support your employees, please get in touch with your consultant or contact us:

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